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Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 55
Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Illustrative agenda of the General Assembly

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. In section B, paragraph 4, of the annex to its resolution 58/126 of 19 December 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General:

> "With a view to better conceptualization of the content of the agenda of the General Assembly, ... to submit to the Assembly, for its consideration by 1 March 2004, an illustrative agenda of the Assembly, based on all the agenda items of the fifty-eighth session, organized around the priorities of the Organization for the period 2002-2005.[1] The General Committee shall hold open-ended discussions on the illustrative agenda before making recommendations on the matter to the Assembly for its decision by 1 July 2004."

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

3. The agenda of the General Assembly in its current form is a single long list of the items from which the Assembly can choose and construct its programme of work for each session. Its advantages are that it is entirely inclusive and that, by not dividing issues into categories but leaving them in a single monolith, it presents those issues without balance or bias, perhaps in the most neutral form and manner. Its disadvantages, frequently lamented, are that it does not give any sense of structure or direction to the work of the General Assembly, and thereby makes the work of the Assembly remote and inaccessible not only to the general public but to many of those who must deal with it daily and directly.

[1] See paragraph 26 of the introduction to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/55/6/Rev.1)), adopted in resolution 55/234.
The priorities indicated are detailed fully in footnote 3 of document A/RES/58/126, and they are also enumerated below.

4. In recent meetings on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, a range of participants has underlined the importance of reformulating the agenda to achieve a more focused presentation of the issues and challenges with which the Assembly deals. Various options have been mentioned or suggested, and a non-paper organizing the agenda under the headings of the Millennium Declaration (hereafter the Declaration proposal) was distributed and discussed in the course of revitalization meetings in the autumn of 2003.[2]

5. The premises of the present proposal (hereafter the plan proposal) were two. It was thought that alignment of agenda items within the categories suggested by the priorities of the Organization as identified in the medium-term plan would facilitate systemic coordination. It was also believed that the separation of agenda items into readily comprehensible categories would make the agenda and the work of the General Assembly more accessible and comprehensible, both to delegations and to the general public.

6. It is, of course, for Member States to decide the extent to which the proposal presented here does indeed meet those goals. Certain observations may however, be offered that could inform this process.

The plan proposal

7. The plan proposal differs from the Declaration proposal in that, where the earlier document mixed or modified the categories of the Millennium Declaration, the priorities of the medium-term plan have been utilized here almost entirely in their original form. The only modification made was that one rubric (category I) was added to house "Organizational and administrative matters" (also a feature of the Declaration proposal). Thus, the categories of the plan proposal are:

A. Maintenance of international peace and security;

B. Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences;

C. Development of Africa;

D. Promotion of human rights;

E. Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts;

F. Promotion of justice and international law;

G. Disarmament;

H. Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations;

I. Organizational and administrative matters.

8. How comfortably can these categories and the items of the agenda of the General Assembly be combined?

[2] The non-paper mentioned here was circulated to Member States by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands on 28 October 2003.

9. From the standpoint of the agenda, items covered in plenary meetings are distributed more or less throughout the categories indicated, as would be expected. (Category H is the only one without a plenary item; categories C and E each have only one item, and both of those are plenary items.) Further, items covered by three of the Main Committees (First, Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth), and Fifth) fall neatly into single categories. However, the Second Committee items split into two categories; the Sixth Committee items split into three categories; and the Third Committee items split into four categories, as shown:

Main Committee	*Categories*
I	G
IV	A
II	A, B
III	A, B, D, H
V	I
VI	F, H, I

10. How problematic are these "splits"? Are they merely a natural and accurate reflection of the reach of the work of the Committees across certain issues and borders? Or are they an indication that a better fit or structure might be found? The current agenda, because of its monolithic nature, is not a helpful basis for comparison in answering this question. It suffers no splits between categories because it has no categories. However, it may be recalled that, in the Declaration proposal, only one Committee — the Sixth — was split between two categories. This was achieved partly by combining Millennium Declaration categories, without which splits would also have occurred in the Second Committee (between categories 3 and 4) and the Third Committee (categories 5 and 6), precisely the same Committees that suffer splits above.

Similarities

11. Clearly, neither plan offers a perfect fit, if indeed such a fit is possible. The imperfections present in both of these proposals, and foreseeable in others, indicate the complexity of the issues with which the General Assembly deals. They also suggest the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of identifying and incorporating a structure that will cleanly divide and comfortably house all of the issues and items involved. Further, and perhaps more importantly, these same imperfections also raise a larger question: do Member States want the structure they choose to relate to and reflect the agenda as it now stands? Or do they want a structure that could suggest the future and serve as a means of guiding the agenda and thereby the Assembly towards it — a directive device that could make both the Assembly and its agenda, as often requested, more realistic and responsive?

12. Regardless of which of these goals the Assembly identifies (or whether, indeed, it claims both of them), these and other similarities between the various options and proposals presented, and the suggestions that they offer, may also well be borne in mind.

13. An additional important similarity between the plan proposal and the Declaration proposal, from the standpoint of the categories, is that both proposals reflect what could be considered to be an imbalance between a few categories that are heavily populated and a number that are but sparsely so. This, in turn, could be taken to indicate a divergence between the agreed priorities of the Organization and the actual foci of its effort. In the plan proposal, the population of categories is as follows:

Category		*Number of items*
I	Organizational and administrative	61
B	Sustained economic growth and sustainable development	33
A	Peace and security	32
G	Disarmament	20
F	International law	13
D	Human rights	6
H	Drug control, crime prevention and terrorism	3
C	Africa	1
E	Humanitarian assistance	1

14. It may be recalled, however, that the Declaration proposal also contained some very sparsely populated categories and some that were far fuller. (Of its seven categories, one was entirely empty and another contained but a single item.)

15. Clearly, as these tabulations indicate, there are some significant similarities between the proposals. This may be due in part to the fact that both proposals, as planning tools, have consciously kept categories fairly broad and simple. (The plan proposal, cognizant of its mandate, has specifically done so both for the purpose of encouraging the raising of issues and topics of concern by delegations and for the purpose of making the agenda more accessible and comprehensible to the public at large.)

16. On the other hand, these similarities could lead one to question the degree to which there may indeed already be important, if untapped, consonance and coordination within the Organization, or at least between two of its key directive documents.

17. But these two similar results could also be taken as an indication, or even reconfirmation, that it is not the categories suggested that are imbalanced and in need of adjustment, but perhaps the agenda itself. They could be taken to underline again how very difficult, if not impossible, it would be to find a paradigm that fits the agenda perfectly. Member States, recalling these results and reflecting upon them, might wish to consider both their ramifications and the means by and extent to which they should be addressed.

Comparative advantages

18. Beyond the similarities cited and the questions they raise, beyond the differences and divergences already identified, other considerations will need to be weighed in deciding which, if either, of the proposals presented should prevail. What, then, are the comparative advantages of the two proposals?

19. As an administrative, organizational and directive document of the United Nations, the medium-term plan does not have the cachet of a document like the Millennium Declaration. It was neither intended nor designed to be the kind of visible and visionary call to arms that that document represents. But the Millennium Declaration, however vital and visionary, does not have the close, clear link to the actual, constantly evolving, day-to-day operations from which the medium-term plan clearly benefits. Nor does it offer the responsiveness that that link implies.

20. These considerations alone would seem to raise again the underlying purpose and objective of this exercise. Which document, which structure, and which outlook most directly deals with the principles and practices in play here? Which responds best to the aims and assumptions of this exercise — and to the needs and problems it is seeking to address?

21. It is possible that alignment of agenda items according to the priorities of the medium-term plan might offer a paradigm that is more flexible and more mutable than others proposed. It could be argued that the Millennium Declaration and other longer-term sets of objectives might offer both a different division of categories and a sometimes neater fitting of items within them. But it could also be argued that, by virtue of their constantly evolving nature, the medium-term plan and other similar directive documents lend themselves quite naturally to the kind of purpose being pursued here. By adjusting more frequently, in shorter time frames, to the continuous movement of the Organization and to the changing demands upon it, the structure proposed here might indeed end up being more responsive to the constantly evolving challenges confronting the United Nations in particular and the international community in general — a goal that many have insisted should be foremost in our minds as we seek to revitalize the General Assembly and its work.

Beyond the two options considered

22. Whichever of the proposals prevails, however, there is a caveat that must be clear. Whatever the structure that emerges, the step being contemplated and considered is but the first step towards the goal of a more realistic, representative and responsive agenda. The step of structuring the agenda, while absolutely essential, is also far from sufficient in itself. Regardless of the paradigm chosen, the goal will still lie many steps ahead.

23. The structuring or restructuring of the agenda might highlight the issues with which the Assembly will have to deal, but it will not resolve them. Alone, it cannot even address them.

24. Structuring, while achieving greater focus, will at the same time demand even further focus yet to achieve the goals it has identified. The essential complement to the effort being made to structure the agenda will necessarily be the vigorous continuing exploration of ways in which the agenda can be shortened and streamlined. Renewed attention and commitment to clustering, joint debates, biennialization and triennialization will be necessary. Relating this initiative closely

and effectively to parallel initiatives also currently being examined — like the options being considered for the improved functioning of the Main Committees — will prove important.

25. Beyond these measures, inventive, adaptive and creative use of the best practices of the Main Committees, which are now actively being studied, could prove of great assistance. To give but one example, the practice of the First Committee of subsuming individual items under general rubrics and then discussing them together is a trait that might very usefully be transferred to the General Assembly as a whole. Following that line, one could envisage the Assembly having comprehensive debates on larger thematic areas rather than specific debates on individual items, while retaining the possibility of adopting resolutions on specific agenda items. If Member States were to choose to follow such a path, then structuring the agenda, according to whichever proposal is chosen, will indeed have gained great mileage.

Illustrative agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly

Aligned with the structure of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, as requested in section B, paragraph 4, of the annex to General Assembly resolution 58/126 of 19 December 2003

A. Maintenance of international peace and security

Plenary items

11. Report of the Security Council.

19. Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

20. Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

21. The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

22. Assistance in mine action.

26. The situation in Central America.

27. Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic.

28. The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

29. Necessity of ending the embargo against Cuba.

30. Question of Cyprus.

31. Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

32. Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

33. The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti.

34. Armed Israeli aggression against Iraqi nuclear installations.

35. Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait.

36. Attack against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the United States.

37. The situation in the Middle East.

38. Question of Palestine.

XX. Elimination of unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion.

XX. Prevention of armed conflict.

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) items

81. Effects of atomic radiation.

82. International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

83. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

84. Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices ...

85. Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects.

86. Questions relating to information.

87. Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

88. Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

89. Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies ...

90. Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Second Committee item

103. Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

Third Committee item

112. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions.

Note: The item numbers are those of the agenda of the fifty-eighth session (A/58/251). XX indicates items that have been biennialized or triennialized and are not to be considered at the fifty-eighth session.

B. Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences

Plenary items

12. Report of the Economic and Social Council.
23. Sport for peace and development.
25. University for Peace.
41. Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children.
42. Follow-up to the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage.
43. Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin.
44. Culture of peace.
45. Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development.
46. Towards global partnerships.
47. Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.
49. Information and communication technologies for development.
50. Follow-up to major United Nations conferences ... .
51. 2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries ... .
160. Global road safety crisis.
XX. Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.

Second Committee items

91. Macroeconomic policy questions.
92. Sectoral policy questions: preventing transfer of funds of illicit origin ... .
93. Sustainable development and international economic cooperation.
94. Environment and sustainable development.
95. Implementation of Agenda 21 ... .
96. United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
97. Operational activities for development.
98. Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).
99. Training and research.
100. Globalization and interdependence.
101. Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements ... .
102. Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries.
104. Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development.

Third Committee items

105. Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development ... .
106. Social development.
107. Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing.
110. Advancement of women.
111. Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women ... .

C. Development of Africa

Plenary item

39. New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support.

D. Promotion of human rights

Plenary item

48. Fifty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Third Committee items

113. Promotion and protection of the rights of children.

114. Programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

115. Elimination of racism and racial discrimination.

116. Right of peoples to self-determination.

117. Human rights questions.

E. Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts

Plenary item

40. Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance.

F. Promotion of justice and international law

Plenary items

13. Report of the International Court of Justice.

52. Oceans and the law of the sea.

53. Report of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

54. Report of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

XX. The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order.

Sixth Committee items

148. Progressive development of the principles and norms of international law relating to the new international economic order.

149. United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law.

150. Convention on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property.

151. Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

152. Report of the International Law Commission.

154. International Criminal Court.

155. Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization.

157. Scope of legal protection under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

G. Disarmament

Plenary item

14. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

First Committee items

62. Reduction of military budgets.

63. Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification.

64. Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

65. African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

66. Consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

67. Review of the implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security.

68. Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

69. Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament.

70. Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

71. Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

72. Prevention of an arms race in outer space.

73. General and complete disarmament.

74. United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament.

75. Disarmament research bodies.

76. The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

77. Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

78. Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

79. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

80. Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

H. Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations

Third Committee items

108. Crime prevention and criminal justice.

109. International drug control.

Sixth Committee item

156. Measures to eliminate international terrorism.

I. Organizational and administrative matters

Plenary items

2. Minute of silent prayer or meditation.
3. Credentials of representatives.
4. Election of the President of the General Assembly.
5. Election of the officers of the Main Committees.
6. Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly.
7. Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations.
8. Organization of work.
9. General debate.
10. Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.
15. Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs.
16. Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections.
17. Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments.
18. Admission of new Members to the United Nations.
24. Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations.
55. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.
56. Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council.
57. United Nations reform.
58. Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.
59. Strengthening of the United Nations system.
60. Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit.
61. Multilingualism.
XX. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations.

Fifth Committee items

118. Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors.
119. Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations.
120. Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.
121. Programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.
122. Programme planning.
123. Improving the financial situation of the United Nations.
124. Scale of assessments.
125. Pattern of conferences.
126. United Nations common system.
127. Human resources management.
128. Administration of justice at the United Nations.
129. Joint Inspection Unit.
130. Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.
131. Financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.
132. Financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.
133. Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations peacekeeping operations.
134. Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations.
135. Financing of the United Nations Missions in Angola.
136. Financing of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
137. Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.
138. Financing of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
139. Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor.
140. Financing of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor.
141. Financing of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
142. Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.
143. Financing of the activities arising from Security Council resolution 687 (1991).
144. Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.
145. Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East.
146. Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.
147. Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.
161. Financing of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire.
165. Financing of the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

Sixth Committee items

153. Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.
158. International convention against the cloning of human beings.
159. Observer status for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in the General Assembly.
162. Observer status for the Eurasian Economic Community in the General Assembly.
163. Observer status for the GUUAM in the General Assembly.
164. Observer status for the East African Community in the General Assembly.
166. Admission of the International Criminal Court to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.